

THE CHURCH THAT IS IN THE HOME OF EVERETTE AND IRENE

By

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By William T. Scott
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In Burlington, North Carolina, 40 souls assembled on Sunday morning, March 1, for their first regular morning service as the new United Church of Christ, sponsored and supported jointly by the Congregational Christian and the Evangelical and Reformed national boards, and the Mission Board of the Southern Convention.

As a member of that first morning congregation, one felt that he was experiencing some of the spirit of the early church, as pastor G. Harold Myers gathered this newest church, "in the house of Everett and Irene (Knight)." The Knights have made available the large basement of their lovely new home for the services of this infant church.

I was particularly impressed at this first service on March 1, and felt that the beginning of the worship services in this home was in perfect line with the great tradition of the early church. It should be remembered that the church of our Lord was begun in a very modest way. There was a long period in the early church during which Christians were dependent upon the hospitality of those of their number who had houses large enough to accommodate them for their services of worship, praise and witness. Not before the end of the second century do we find clear evidence of buildings especially set apart for Christian worship, known as churches.

Assisting in this first service of our newest United Church of Christ were Miss Anne Kernodle, pianist, and John Kernodle, usher, children of Dr. and Mrs. John Robert Kernodle, lay members of our First Christian Church in Burlington, N. C. These young people are lineal descendants of Rev. James

O'Kelly, founder of the Christian denomination in the South in 1792. They are also greatgrandchildren of the late Dr. Daniel Albright Long, distinguished minister of the Southern Convention, and one time President of Antioch College, Yellow Springs, Ohio, one of the first co-educational colleges of America, and founded by the Christian denomination. One felt that a past generation was participating with the present and future in this latest witness of the Southern Convention.

Rev. G. Harold Myers spoke very convincingly to the congregation on "What the Church Will Do For You." He stated, "It will bring you into relationship with God, who forgives you of your sins, and calls you from your sins to His power; it will bring you into fellowship with one another on a basis which will be a blessing to the world; and gives you a relation to God and man, which makes you a redemptive force to your community and world."

The Mission, Christened "Edgewood United Church of Christ," opened its charter member roll on the 5th day of April and organized a Church School the same day with 5 classes enrolling 52 persons. The church School classes are being held in the Knight home and other homes in the Edgewood Community of Burlington.

On the second Sunday in May, Family Day Observance was held in the young church with the first two infant children Christened:

Russell Huffines, son of Mr. and Mrs. Frank Huffines;

Michael Boyce, son of Mr. and Mrs. Marshall Boyce.

The following Sunday was the scene of the first Communion service

on the day of Pentecost with some 49 persons sharing the table representing seven different church communions. The Communion Service used was a gift of one of the sponsoring churches, First Evangelical and Reformed Church of Burlington.

The climax came on Sunday, June 7th, when 52 charter members were received officially into the newly organized Church at the service held at 3:00 P.M. on the lawn of the Knight home, under the shade of oak and elm, before a worship center overarched with the green and blossom of the trees. Dr. Harvey A. Fesperman, President of the Southern Synod, delivered an inspiring message, and Dr. William T. Scott ordained the first four Deacons and one Deaconess to be elected in the Church: Mr. Everette Knight, Mr. Johnny Bryan, Mr. Rector Hunt, Mr. Claude Ward, and Mrs. Jessie Strader.

The congregation has formed under a new type of church organization which came out of a special study group which went back to the New Testament Church in the Acts of the Apostles, as well as studying the tradition of the Evangelical and Reformed and the Congregational Christian Churches. Following the three main principles seen in the early church, namely, (1) Spiritual life supreme; (2) Organization at a minimum; (3) Self-Governing but awareness that it was a part of a larger brotherhood--the interim organization of the church has Deacons, Pastor, and 5 major Committee Chairmen, which will compose the Church Council and who are all elected by the congregation. The Deacons and Deaconess are members of the Council from which the officers of the church must be chosen, thus



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keeping spiritual power supreme. The five major Committees are Trustees, Finance, Evangelism, Worship, and Christian Education, each seeing that this area of church life is no more important than the other. All are members of one another serving the needs of all. As growth and need desire, more committees may be added.

A five acre tract of land has been purchased, and the congregation is at present engaged in a Capital Investment Project seeking to raise through pledges, gifts, and loans sufficient funds to construct a modern Christian Education unit which contains a large chapel for worship and space for 9 classrooms which will permit in addition to regular study classes and worship community needs such as weekday kindergarten and youth activities. It is hoped that in this growing area, where there is no institution of any kind within two miles, the church will serve to be the unifying force to build a spirit of Christian concern and neighborliness as well as Christian character and a deep abiding faith in God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The Southern Convention and the Southern Synod take pride in the fact that this is the third United Church of Christ church extension project being co-sponsored. The other two United Church projects jointly shared by the Evangelical and Reformed and Congregational Christian denominations as part of the United Church of Christ are St. Peter's in Greenboro, North Carolina, and St. Andrews in Richmond, Virginia, started in 1958.

June 25, 1959

